

South Seaville Methodist Camp
Meeting Grounds, Cottage No. 60
New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail
2 Morris Avenue
South Seaville
Cape May County
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-1049-B

HABS
NJ
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SOUTH SEAVILLE METHODIST CAMP MEETING GROUNDS, COTTAGE NO. 60

HABS No. NJ-1049-B

Location: 2 Morris Avenue, South Seaville Camp Meeting grounds, Dennisville Road (one mile West of U.S. Highway 9), South Seaville, Cape May County, New Jersey

Present Owner: Cottage owned by Doris Endicott; land leased from the South Seaville Camp Meeting Association

Present Use: Summer cottage, located on Methodist camp meeting grounds

Significance: This is a well-preserved two-story gothic cottage typical of South Seaville Camp Meeting construction of the 1870s-1890s. This basic cottage form is seen in different stages of alteration throughout the meeting grounds.¹

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The cottage was erected in 1882, according to the lease records of the meeting association and other sources.²
2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and subsequent owners: From A Time to Remember: "Leased by James Henderson, 1876, who with wife, Sarah Ann, and others, advanced funds for the purchase of land from Chas. Ludlam, South Dennis in 1875 for a permanent camp meeting site. In 1882, lease passed to Capt. Charles Brower, Townsend's Inlet, and cottage constructed that same year....In 1891, lease passed to sea Capt. Jeremiah Smith, Assn Director, 1890-1910. Hammock hooks affixed to cottage wall attest to his sailing days. Florence Hand became lessee in 1915 at death of her father, Jeremiah Smith, and present owner [Mrs. Doris (Berry) Endicott] acquired lease March 1964 through Elizabeth Hand from her mother, Florence Hand's estate."³

¹ Common alterations include: removal of decorative trim (seen in historic photos), enclosing porches, addition of windows, connection of two cottages, enclosing a shed kitchen, and addition of significant new structures.

² From September 2, 1882 Cape May County Gazette and SSCMA lease records, as cited in Audrey Sullivan and Doris Young, A Time to Remember: A History of New Jersey Methodists' First Camp Meeting South Seaville, New Jersey, 1864-1988 (South Seaville, NJ: The South Seaville Camp Meeting Assn, Inc., 1988), pp.241-3.

³ Ibid., pp. 241-3.

SOUTH SEAVILLE METHODIST CAMP
MEETING GROUNDS, COTTAGE NO. 60
HABS No. NJ-1049-B (Page 2)

4. Alterations and Additions: The Endicotts added plumbing in 1972; and fitted a toilet and sink into the tiny former closet under the stairs at the same time. A window, extending out, was added to the west side of the cottage in the summer of 1991; the decorative brackets under the window were saved from a renovation of the cottage two to the east. The one-story kitchen at the rear of the cottage, once an outside shed, has been enclosed. A window has been cut through between the house and the kitchen, and a window was cut for the bathroom conversion. Endicott added a standing shower to the second floor room in 1984. The porch entrance was originally in the central bay.⁴

B. Historical Context:

For its first eight years 1863-1871, the Seaville meeting was announced by the Bridgeton District Presiding Elder and met at the Cape May County Agricultural fairgrounds.⁵ The earliest minutes from the South Jersey Camp Meeting Association are dated July 22, 1872. The local lay leaders organized, elected officers, and located a permanent wooded camp ground. The first lot-leasing was on July 16, 1875, and in 1876 the Association incorporated. The directors--prominent Cape May citizens--set up the association as a stockholder's corporation, where one leased the lots and built/purchased/rented the cottages or tents.⁶

The various housing options created social divisions--those who owned cottages, those who used tents, and lastly, those without housing--the day-trip excursionists. This character of the early Seaville community, as shown in its architecture and early records, created internal tensions. The meeting was founded by influential Cape May county families; the directors in 1875 drew up a plan which was quite urban--extremely dense, with 500 lots, and laid out primarily in a grid, with Avenues named after deceased Methodist ministers, and park-squares. Yet simultaneously the founders valued the "grove" quality of the meeting grounds; the early camp rules show particular care for the sheltering shade trees.⁷ One 1877 newspaper editorial expressed the view that the permanent Seaville meeting marked an end to formerly egalitarian years. "Evidently the good old days of Methodist camp meetings, when all who would go and partake freely of the rich gospel feast, without regard to his means, or as to how he should tent upon the hallowed spot; if he had no canvas, his tent of sheets and bed quilts was just as "ten" as the \$700 cottage of the present day."⁸ Tents were not as favored in Seaville as in Ocean Grove, and the regulated community of neat cottages seemed to this writer to represent a class snobbishness.

⁴ Personal interviews with Mrs. Doris Endicott 6/26/1992 (South Seaville), and 6/29/1992 (Ocean City). Also from historic photos in Mrs. Endicott's possession.

⁵ Ibid., p.44.

⁶ Ibid., pp.59-64.

⁷ Sullivan and Young, pp.276-9.

⁸ Ibid., p.58.

A consideration of cottage architecture can tell us something about how the camp meeting design fit into the larger setting of Victorian society. Most cottages were simple, two-story, two-room rectangular structures with differing degrees of gable trim and porch elahoration. Street views from the early twentieth century show that these structures, intended for use only a few weeks a year, were quite detailed in their external decoration. Inside, the cottages had bare wood walls, and lacked lighting and plumbing. Furnishings and design were not the consciously "rustic" style favored in wilderness retreat camps and other locales of that era.⁹ From the outside these were miniature gothic revival homes, although they had certain peculiarities which indicated their origins in tent life (flaps, etc.). Thus this conflict runs through the design and conception of camp meeting life, between the urbane and rustic aspirations of the late 19th-century middle-class. One can see from today's plan of Seaville (see attachment) that since so few of the lots were built upon, it is often difficult to tell that they are laid out on a grid--they appear to be standing quite randomly in the quiet woods.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This cottage is among the more elaborate, with extant decorate scrollwork and trim. Many have undergone alteration including the removal of ornamental details and the enclosing of front porches. Underneath the elaborate trim, however, the cottage possesses a diminutive, simple frame--the basic building block of most South Seaville cottages. The September 2 1882 Cape May County Gazette found that the cottage "is in a very desirable location, and is one of the handsomest on the front."¹⁰
2. Condition of fabric: Interior and exterior are in excellent condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: This is a two-story board-and-batten gothic revival cottage with steep gables, and triple-arched porches on the first and second stories. The cottage has extensive decorative sawn scrollwork on porch railings, vergeboards, the trusses at the gable apex, and finial. The front roof gable extends about five feet beyond the building's facade to shelter the porches. Each floor contains one room, and a one-story shed kitchen is added at rear.
2. Foundations: The cottage rests on a wood platform elevated one foot, supported by brick piers.
3. Walls: The exterior walls are of Board-and batten construction, framed with cornerboards.

⁹ The Rustic style of architecture-- later adopted by the National Park Service-- was prominent in areas such as the Adirondacks of New York, where the first such buildings appeared in the mid to late 1870s. Rustic design incorporated log, bark and stone in a simplistic style intended to blend into a woodland setting.

¹⁰ As cited in Sullivan and Young, p.241.

SOUTH SEAVILLE METHODIST CAMP
MEETING GROUNDS, COTTAGE NO. 60
HABS No. NJ-1049-B (Page 4)

4. Structural system, framing: The cottage is of wood-frame construction, incorporating mortise and tenon joints.
 5. Porches: The front of the cottage is ornamented by elaborate jig-sawn trim porches on the first and second stories. On the first story, four chamfered posts support the porch, with large cut-out brackets in a floral motif, which come together between the posts to create a pointed arch. A balustrade is created using cut-out design balusters laid horizontally. The porch has been enclosed with screening. The second story porch is similar but with the posts rising up to the gable end, with cross members to form a truss-pattern framing for the cut-out design of the gable end.
 6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: One centered doorway offers access onto each porch. The wood door trim has a simple pediment, crowned on the first floor by sawn woodwork.
 - b. Windows: Originally, the house appears to have had only one window-- for ventilation-- at the second-floor rear. (See "Additions" section). A top-hinged wood shutter on this window is propped open, possibly evocative of the canvas flaps of camp meeting tents. The shed kitchen also has top-hinged shutters.
 8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: The cottage has a steep-pitched, front-gabled roof, covered with cedar shingles. The west side shingles date from ca. 1957, while the right side was redone in recent years. This is possibly the only cottage which still has a cedar shingle roof.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: The roof overhangs to either side and to the front to form the roof of the porch, with exposed rafters. In the front gable end are lace-pattern vergeboards and a final.
- C. Description of Interior:
1. Floor plans: The cottage has a simple plan of one room per floor, with a one-story rear shed kitchen addition.
 2. Stairways: There is a narrow stair to the second story.
 3. Flooring: The original wood flooring remains.
 4. Wall and ceiling finish: The interior is unfinished, with the wood studs and floor beams left exposed. Mortise and tenon construction is visible.
 5. Mechanical systems:
 - a. Lighting fixtures: The cottage was originally constructed without lighting fixtures.
 - b. Heating: The cottage-- intended for use during the summer months only-- remains unheated.

SOUTH SEAVILLE METHODIST CAMP
MEETING GROUNDS, COTTAGE NO. 60
HABS No. NJ-1049-B (Page 5)

c. Plumbing: The cottage originally had no plumbing; water came from a pump, chamber pots were used and baths were taken in the lake. Septic systems have since been added. A toilet and sink were added under the stairway in 1972, and a shower, on the second floor, in 1984.

d. Stove: A kerosene stove was first used, converting to a cook stove in 1963 or 1964.

D. Site:

1. General Setting: The cottage is located on the "inner circle" of the meeting grounds, close to the auditorium (site #60 in 1988 plan of grounds).

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Summer 1992

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

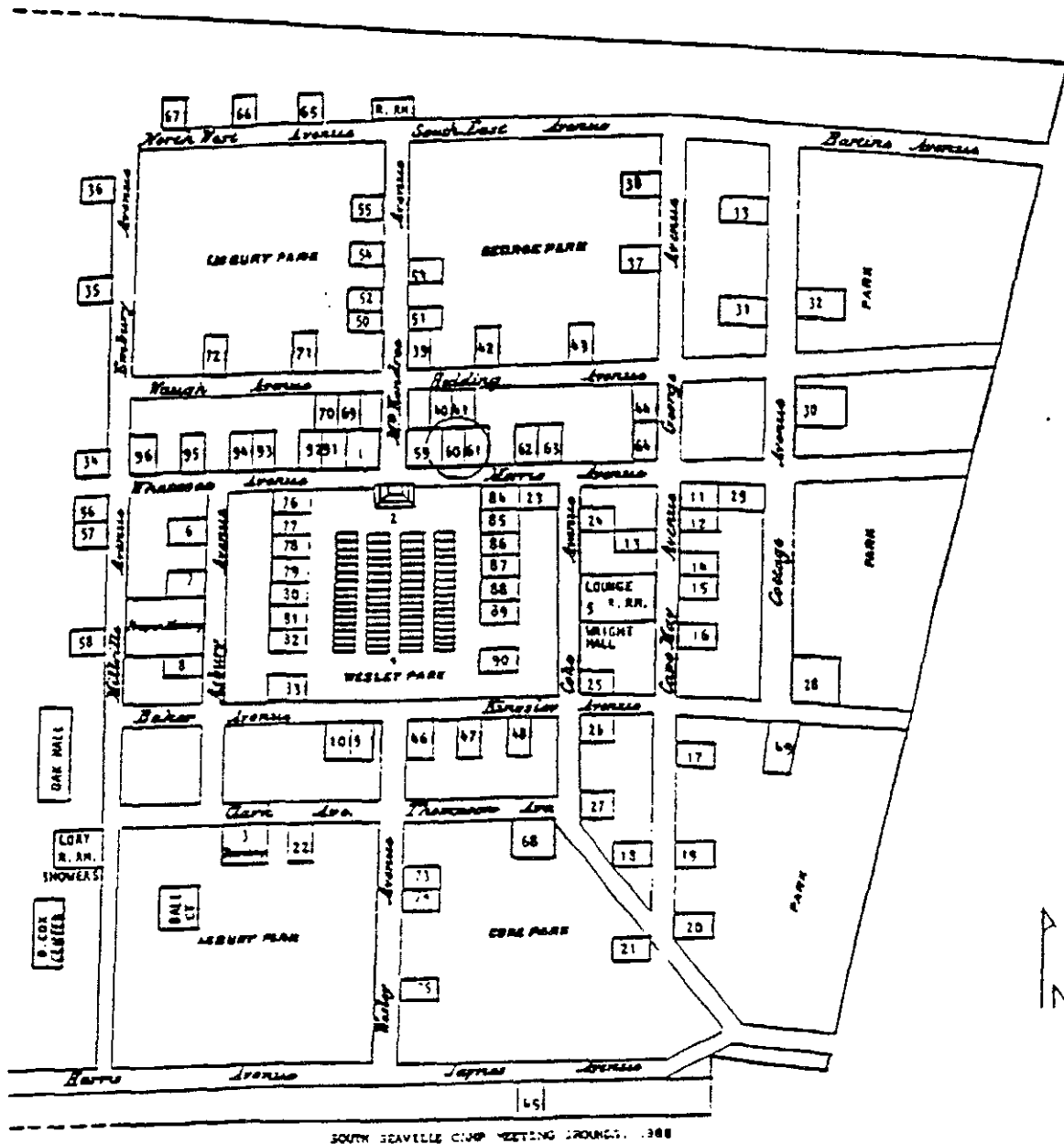
A. Old views: The best sources of historic photos, besides Sullivan and Young's book, are the private collections of South Seaville residents. Although Sullivan resides in Florida, she has a cottage in South Seaville, and can most likely be reached through the Camp Meeting Association.

B. Primary and unpublished sources: For anyone researching South Seaville, one book is indispensable: Audrey Sullivan and Doris Young, A Time to Remember: A History of New Jersey Methodists' First Camp Meeting, South Seaville, New Jersey, 1864-1988 (South Seaville, New Jersey: The South Seaville Camp Meeting Assn., Inc., 1988). According to Sullivan and Young, no official records exist for 1863-1872, but one can find material in newspapers. The Directors' meeting minutes since 1872 have survived, and lot lease records. Sullivan and Young tracked down 50 camp programs--40 from 1947 forward. Many of the present cottage-owners have printed material, leases, photographs, postcard views, and artifacts. Mrs. Doris Endicott has several scrapbooks of material, particularly relating to her cottage. Local newspapers--including the Cape May Ocean Wave, the Cape May County Gazette, and Star of the Cape--proved to be valuable in Sullivan and Young's research. See also:

Sebold, Kimberly, and Sara Amy Leach. Historic Themes and Resources within the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail: Southern New Jersey and the Delaware Bay. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1991.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was sponsored by the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail (NJCHT) of the National Park Service, Janet Wolf, director. The documentation was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), Robert Kapsch, chief, under the direction of HABS historian Sara Amy Leach, project supervisor. Three historians completed the research during summer 1991: Field supervisor Sarah Allaback (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Alfred Holden (University of Vermont), and Camille Gatza (North Carolina). David Ames (University of Delaware) made the large-format photographs.



"South Seaville Camp Meeting Grounds 1988"
(numbers denote individual cottages, No. 60 circled)

from: Atria Sullivan and Doris Young, A Time to Remember: A History of New Jersey Methodists' First Camp Meeting, South Seaville, New Jersey, 1864-1988 (South Seaville, New Jersey: The South Seaville Camp Meeting Assn., Inc., 1988) p. 303.